

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: OGEN

SUBJ: THAT LUANG FAIR

REF: USIA 22468

1. AFTER DISCUSSING WITH OTHER MEMBERS COUNTRY TEAM THAT LUANG FAIR EXHIBIT PROPOSED REFTEL, I FIND NO ONE WHO BELIEVES IT AN IMPROVEMENT ON SPACE-BICENTENNIAL THEME.

2. THE MOST IMMEDIATE OBJECTION IS THAT AMERICAN HANDICRAFTS SHOW, ALTHOUGH ATTRACTIVE AND INTERESTING TO CITIZENS OF INDUSTRIALIZED COUNTRIES, IS IN LAOS A CLEAR CASE OF COALS TO NEWCASTLE. INDEED, THE LAO PLAN TO DISPLAY HANDICRAFTS AT THAT LUANG AS EXAMPLES OF COMMERCIAL EXPORT PRODUCTS. IT IS ONE AREA IN WHICH THEY DO AS WELL AS WE, IF NOT BETTER.

3. HANDICRAFTS SHOW MIGHT WELL PROVE COUNTERPRODUCTIVE, LEADING LAO TO BELIEVE U.S. IS ALMOST AS BACKWARD AS LAOS. OUR HANDICRAFTS ARE OF ARTISTIC AND ANTHROPOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE; THEIRS ARE OBJECTS OF DAILY USE. THE AVERAGE LAO FAIR-GOER IS NOT LIKELY TO MAKE THE DISTINCTION.

4. ALTHOUGH PROPOSED SPACE EXHIBIT IS LARGELY PAPER,
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IT INCLUDES FILMS WHICH I UNDERSTAND USIS/LAOS ALREADY

HAD DUBBED INTO LAO. FILMS OF THE APOLLO-SOYUZ FLIGHT, IF AVAILABLE, WOULD PROVIDE ADDITIONAL EVIDENCE OF AMERICAN SPACE SUCCESS WHICH THE SOVIETS CANNOT DENY. SOME LAO MAY WELL FAIL TO BELIEVE ANY EVIDENCE AT ALL OF AMERICAN SPACE SUCCESS, BUT SUCH A SHOW WOULD AT LEAST PROVIDE A COUNTERWEIGHT TO SOVIET PROPAGANDA. FURTHERMORE, OUR OWN AND OTHER EXHIBITORS' EXPERIENCE OF PREVIOUS THAT LUANG FAIRS INDICATE THAT FILMS OR FAST-PACED SLIDE SHOWS ARE THE MOST EFFECTIVE EXHIBITS WITH LOCAL AUDIENCES; STATIC DISPLAYS, AS WE GATHER HANDICRAFTS SHOW WOULD BE, HAVE SIGNIFICANTLY LESS IMPACT.

5. IF WASHINGTON OBJECTS TO SATELLITE PHOTO OF LAOS (WE DO NOT), WE COULD ALSO MAKE EFFECTIVE USE OF A COLOR PHOTO OF THE EARTH TAKEN FROM SPACE.

6. A SMALL HANDICRAFTS EXHIBIT WITH A MORE ARTISTIC THAN UTILITARIAN EMPHASIS MIGHT BE AN ATTRACTIVE ADDITION TO PAVILION. HOWEVER, I WOULD LIKE TO STRESS APPROPRIATENESS OF SPACE EXHIBIT AS (A) COUNTERWEIGHT TO SOVIET PROPAGANDA, (B) AN EXAMPLE OF AN AREA IN WHICH U.S. IS CLEARLY AHEAD OF OTHER COUNTRIES, (C) A SUBJECT OF INTEREST TO NEARLY EVERYONE.
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